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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: ASSEMBLY PREPARES RESPONSIBLY FOR PASSAGE
OF AHTISAARI LEGISLATION

Classified By: COM TINA KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Kosovo Assembly completed three key pre-declaration tasks during its February 15 session: it approved a fast-track process for Ahtisaari laws with a two-thirds vote of support; it began to publish the votes of each member, in line with democratic transparency across Europe; and it confirmed members of the Committee on Rights and Interests of Communities, fixing a procedural snafu in a previous session. With these three steps - taken with hand-holding from us, but done responsibly and quickly - the Assembly has done its part in preparing institutionally for the historic days to come. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The Assembly passed a motion allowing it to depart from its normal rules of procedure when considering Ahtisaari-related laws. Now, whenever Ahtisaari laws reach the Assembly, they will be dealt with uniformly and in expedited process. The First Reading will be held within 24 hours of the laws' formal submission to the Assembly. Second and final Reading will be held the next day. In the interim, the laws will be considered by a special ad-hoc committee, rather than pass through the numerous committees which would have oversight of normal legislation. The ad-hoc committee's nine members reflect the diversity of the Assembly, with two PDK and two LDK members, and one each from AAK, AKR, LDD, and Seven Plus (the latter made up of Bosniak, Turk and Roma representatives). The ninth place is for a member of the Serb caucus. (NOTE: Bojan Stojanovic, head of the Serb caucus, abstained from the vote on the procedural motion, afraid of backlash from other Serbs since the motion deals with post-declaration events. However, he told us he plans to assign someone to participate on the committee if things remain safe and calm following a declaration. END NOTE.)

¶3. (C) The Assembly also made an important step forward in democratic transparency when it published electronically-cast votes for the first time. The record of the vote on the above motion was distributed to members during the session, and will also be published on the Assembly's website. (COMMENT: This move comes nearly a year after we and Assembly advisors from OSCE and NDI began advocating for it. It was stymied for a time by now-PM Thaci's discomfort,

soothed following the November elections. In recent days, members of every caucus came to a consensus in support of open voting, and we are pleased that the new Assembly is starting off on the right foot. The measure will also help us identify if there are any problems in passing Ahtisaari legislation, though this appears increasingly unlikely. END COMMENT.)

¶4. (U) The Committee on Rights and Interests of Communities (CRIC) is enshrined in the Constitutional Framework as one of the Assembly's two Main Committees, providing oversight to protect minority interests. Due to a procedural defect in the January 31 session, CRIC membership was not affirmed; now, the committee will be formally constituted and can convene.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: Heavy outreach to the Assembly paid dividends this week and we are glad these three key steps were taken prior to a declaration. Speaker Krasniqi's effective leadership on these issues was a helpful factor. Still, a debate prior to the Ahtisaari motion vote demonstrated once again that caucus leaders are unable to control all their members, with a particularly disappointing showing from opposition AAK, where four of seven MPs present voted against. We will weigh in frequently with MPs from all parties to ensure things continue in the right direction. END COMMENT.
KAIDANOW